

BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

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Beating Christmas Stress & Anxiety

The Christmas season is meant to be a time of joy, but for many people it can be a time of stress, anxiety, disappointment or loneliness. Christmas comes with high expectations of perfect, happy families enjoying luxurious celebrations and gifts, but not all of us are able to live up to these ideals. For those who have recently lost a loved one, Christmas can intensify feelings of grief and sadness. Some people experience feelings of isolation, financial pressures or increased family conflict that can make this a very stressful time of year.

However, there are some steps you can take to help manage stress and anxiety during the festive period.

TAKING CARE OF MONEY WORRIES

Is the festive season a burden on your wallet? Here are some tips for managing your Christmas finances and reducing your silly season stress:

- **Identify what's causing you financial stress.** Buying gifts and attending social get togethers can be expensive. Plan ways to reduce spending. For example, you could suggest to your family and friends that you only buy gifts for the kids, or organize a 'Secret Santa' among the adults. Set a budget and stick to it.
- **Find low cost ways to have fun.** Don't let money cut you off from your family and friends. If you can't afford expensive restaurant meals or cocktail catch-ups, organize a BBQ in the park or a party at home where everyone brings a plate of food.

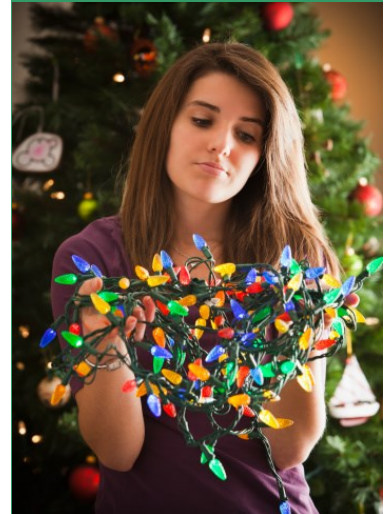
MANAGING LONELINESS

There are ways to overcome loneliness if you find yourself isolated or grieving a loved one over the Christmas period.

- **Connect with friends and family.** Even if you're separated by distance, you can stay in touch with loved ones online or by phone.
- **Volunteer.** Why not lend a hand to a local shelter over Christmas? There are lots of charities who need help. You'll connect with people and feel good about making a positive contribution.
- **Make plans for Christmas Day.** Develop a plan in advance to avoid feeling depressed or stressed on the day. Perhaps make yourself a special breakfast or buy yourself a gift in advance for you to enjoy on the day.

Need additional stress management tips? Call BHS today to speak with your Care Coordinator about holiday stress management and coping skills: 800-245-1150.

Stay healthy to avoid Christmas anxiety



Avoid Negativity

If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you cannot turn the relationship around, limit time with the person.

Stay healthy, literally

Play it safe. Washing your hands frequently, using hand sanitizer & remembering to keep your hands away from your mouth can decrease your chances of catching a virus.

Simplify gift giving

If you have family spread over the country consider using Google Docs. The website allows you to create wish lists that can be viewed by family. It is always easier to shop for your difficult Uncle when you know what he wants.

Be thankful

Adopt an attitude of gratitude by directing your thoughts away from negative thought patterns when you're stressed.

How You Can Get a Better Night's Sleep

If you're like many Americans, you're probably not getting enough sleep. Constantly on the go, you may think you never have enough time to finish everything on your to-do list. But that doesn't mean you should shortchange your sleep -- or your health, for that matter.

So start by making sleep a priority in your life. Then, follow these simple tips to help you get better ZZZs and wake up feeling refreshed every morning.

- **Sleep Fix #1: Give your bedroom a make-over.** Make your sleeping area conducive to rest by keeping it dark and quiet. If you live in a city, consider using a white-noise machine to block out loud noises. Keep in mind that your body temperature drops at night, so you want to keep your room environment at a cool, comfortable level.
- **Sleep Fix #2: Get enough sleep.** Most people need seven or eight hours to optimally function, says Nancy Collop, MD, director of the Emory Sleep Center in Atlanta and president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. "You don't want to be tired or sleepy during the day," she says. If you need an alarm clock to wake up, find yourself chugging caffeine to stay awake, or you nod off during meetings, you may not be getting enough shut-eye.
- **Sleep Fix #3: Establish a regular routine.** Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. People who frequently switch their sleep times experience something akin to jet lag. Experts point to "Sunday night insomnia," where weekend warriors stay up late on Friday and Saturday and then have trouble falling asleep on Sunday. Just that 24-48 hours can shift your circadian rhythm and cause poor sleep.
- **Sleep Fix #4: Put away your gadgets.** It's tempting to watch TV or surf the web from bed, but those activities usually make it harder to wind down. The latest research suggests that artificial light coming from laptop screens, TVs, etc. suppresses the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin. So give yourself a technology curfew and turn off those screens at least an hour before bedtime.
- **Sleep Fix #5: Avoid alcohol before bed.** Contrary to popular opinion, drinking alcohol before bedtime is not a good idea since it disrupts sleep and causes nighttime awakenings. Chronic use of alcohol also takes away slow-wave sleep. It wears off quickly, and then you're left with nightmares and sleep fragmentation. Caffeine before bedtime is also a no-no.
- **Sleep Fix #6: Know how much sleep your kids need.** According to a National Sleep Foundation (NSF) survey, only 20% of adolescents get the recommended nine hours of sleep per night on school nights. The NSF recommends that children ages 3 to 5 need 11 to 13 hours; ages 5 to 10 need 10 to 11 hours; ages 10 to 17 need 8.5 to 9.5 hours; ages 18 and above need 7 to 9 hours.
- **Sleep Fix #7: Make bedtime a priority for the whole family.** School-age kids benefit from a regular bedtime routine. Use rituals that help children wind down like a bath, brushing teeth, and story time. Be aware that your kids may try to push the bedtime limits. "Kids are pretty savvy, they'll try to manipulate parents if they can keep coming back in the room and parents need to try to avoid giving into to that," says Collop.



Once you resolve to make sleep a priority for your family, you will enjoy a more positive outlook, have more patience in dealing with family distractions and experience an overall healthier feeling.



Office Christmas Party Etiquette

With your office Christmas party fast approaching, we offer this simple etiquette guide to help you navigate this perilous social minefield.

Be 'on brand.' Lean towards the conservative in all things but especially in your choice of fancy dress. Take time to consider any unwanted interpretations ones ensemble might present.

Know one's limitations. Do not take the words 'free bar' as a personal challenge. If after three drinks you are confident, five hilarious, and seven a demon who likes to argue, then set your bar securely for the duration of your evening.

There is a time and a place to be memorable. While it is indeed possible you possess the dance moves of a young Travolta or know all the words to "Gangnam Style" in the original Korean, ask yourself, is this the correct moment to demonstrate said ability?

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Stay Fit While Traveling

Be creative! Plenty of exercises require little-to-no equipment at all. Do pushups to work your upper body, your core and get your heart rate elevated. Squats and lunges are a perfect workout for your legs.

You can tone your triceps by doing dips from a chair (keep your feet flat on the floor). Jumping rope or jogging in place will get your blood flowing and your heart pumping.

You can also bring a resistance band for a quick workout to maintain muscle strength. If you don't have a resistance band, try filling water bottles to mimic dumbbells.

Eating Healthy While Traveling

Some examples of healthy snacks you can bring are:

Whole grain crackers, high fiber cereal, fig bars, granola mix, nuts, and dried fruit

If you can pack a cooler try cheese sticks, yogurt, hard boiled eggs, or lean meats

Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water

Remember to eat breakfast

Healthy Restaurant Ideas Try these tips:

Order a half portion & share

Choose baked instead of fried foods

Order your salad with the dressing on the side

Skip the mayo & calorie dense sauces

Have a side salad instead of the bread or a basket of chips

Choose fruit!

Bananas are loaded with energizing potassium & snacking on one can banish tiredness for up to 2 hours. Extra energy is always helpful!

Office Party Etiquette (continued)

There is such a thing as too much information. Your willingness to open up is admirable but choosing this particular moment to share intimate or previously unmentioned information about yourself with co-workers is best avoided. You may swear by the health benefits of drinking vinegar, collect small porcelain figurines of animals dressed as humans, or organize your holidays around Barbra Streisand touring schedule, but these are details best kept to oneself.



Realize the benefits of proper nutrition. It is always best to eat a hearty meal in advance of a notable social occasion as canapés are an impractical cushion, unless you plan to graze for six hours straight. Consider dining on pasta, pizza or even a simple burger.

Keep guests in check. Usually it is appropriate to bring a guest to an office party, but make sure you check first so your significant other is not the only non-employee. Guests should also follow party rules as to not damage your reputation. Guests can act as a great buffer too.

Mingle and jingle. Office parties might be the opportunity you have been waiting for to get to know colleagues that you normally don't get the chance to chat with. Get to know the photocopy guy better, your secretary better, and other colleagues too, and this could mean better rapport with others down the road.

Above all, know when to bow out gracefully. As a simple equation to guide you -- the last one left standing is the one least likely to be standing come January. Enough said.

Start-Right Strata Recipe: Christmas Morning Casserole

Ingredients:

4 slices white bread, torn into pieces
4 breakfast turkey sausage links, casings removed, crumbled
1 cup fat-free milk
3/4 egg substitute
1/2 cup reduced-fat sour cream
1/4 shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese
1/4 cup salsa

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes plus standing

Servings: 4 servings

Instructions:

- Place bread in an 8-inch square baking dish coated with cooking spray
- In a small non-stick skillet, cook the sausage and onion over medium heat. Spoon over bread.
- In a small bowl, combine the milk, egg substitute and sour cream.
- Stir in cheese.
- Pour over the mixture.



- Cover and refrigerate overnight (if possible)
- Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 35-40 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Let stand for 10 minutes before cutting.
- Serve with salsa.

Recipe source: tasteofhome.com